

For Professor Takagiwa On His Retirement

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Writing these words on the first day of the New Year of 2014, I am aware that Professor Takagiwa is retiring from Utsunomiya University and that our fourth floor of the International Department is losing its anchor – his office lies at the deepest, most interior corner of our floor, just outside the meeting room for the department’s monthly faculty meeting. Seven years ago when I arrived on the Utsunomiya campus Professor Takagiwa was one of the first professors I met. He drove me to my apartment, advised me which futon I should buy. Later, and as a secondary advisor for his students I have enjoyed his sense that knowledge is a form of exploration. When I step inside his seminar room I know there will be a cup of tea from England to greet me; brought back from one of his trips to the British Museum. When strains of Handel waft into the hall from his office or his seminar room I often smile, knowing he is immersed in the fabric of his love for the culture and the taste of England – a love (I am at pains to admit) what may be deeper and more passionate than my own.

My family hails from the British Isles: my bloodline is a pastiche of Irish, English and Scottish though my mother and my father’s families have lived in America for generations. Though our trajectories are very different, both Takagiwa-sensei and I share in our identification with Anglo-saxon culture. Professor Takagiwa inhabits England in ways that I can only imagine. He does not take British culture for granted – as perhaps I have. His passion for England and for the English language has resulted in his establishment of the English Intensive Camp (EIC) – a cornerstone of the International Department and a key step in identity formation for our international students at Utsunomiya University.

It was during this English Intensive Camp that the import of the diversity of our trajectories became apparent to me. It was perhaps the second night when we teachers sat on tatami unwinding after the intensity of a day with students as we enjoyed our senbei, wine, cheese and beer. Talk turned toward culture, world politics, war and peace and as Takagiwa-sensei

and I faced each other across that table we both realized that our fathers were at pains to kill each another during World War II. Yet here we are, our father's children, united in our passionate devotion to global understanding through multicultural education, sharing a beer, sitting on tatami and drinking together in our pajamas.

The English Intensive Camp (EIC) will continue now as a part of the International Career Seminar (ICS) and will be known as the International Communication Seminar.

Professor Takagiwa's anchor is now a ship. His vision for diversity will sail on long after he has left his office and retired from the International Faculty of Utsunomiya University. In his devotion and enthusiasm for England, the English language, diversity and multicultural education, he and I share a vision for the future that forms a bond as strong as that of my own family. His paternal presence on our floor will be missed, but his passion for diversity, for knowledge and for the lives of his students will endure.

We will miss you sensei. All hands on deck, as we will seek to make you proud.